

## “Forward Regent’s!”

THE old college cry, beloved of many generations of Regent’s men, is to-day being filled with a larger significance. It has rallied many a football team fighting against odds, it has made the welkin ring on many occasions in London railway termini just before a boat train has left on which a Regent’s man has been going forth to the Mission Field, the song of which it is the refrain is sung at College gatherings, and it is the “passport” whenever old students meet. Now it provides a slogan for the notable “Forward Movement” of the College itself.

Regent’s Park College has ever been progressive. It was founded by men of far-sighted vision, and throughout its career its leaders have not only kept abreast of theological learning in a way that has given the College a reputation extending far beyond denominational borders, but they have had the courage to “launch out into the deep” in matters of policy and development. The removal from Stepney to Regent’s Park, in 1856, was more than a change of abode; it was a real “forward movement”. The affiliation with London University as one of its schools in the Faculty of Theology was another. To-day nearly all our Baptist colleges have such a connection with a university, to their mutual benefit, but Regent’s Park was the pioneer. And now once more the College is committed to a courageous policy of advance. The original impetus came partly from circumstances beyond its control. The building in Regent’s Park was held on leasehold tenure, and the near approach of the end of the lease, coupled with the impossibility of its renewal on terms that the College could afford, compelled a consideration of future policy. But if this was the occasion it was not entirely the cause of the proposal to move to Oxford. The idea of a Baptist theological college at one of the older universities has long been cherished by many who are concerned about ministerial training. While gladly acknowledging the splendid contribution to higher education that is being made by the newer universities, especially where, as e.g., at London and Manchester, there is a well-organised Theological Faculty, they have recognised that Oxford and Cambridge are still *sui generis*. It is not simply the charm of their ancient buildings or the glamour of their age-long traditions, though these have a definite cultural value. Still less is it a question of the Oxford or Cambridge “manner” or “accent.” It is that the two ancient universities are still our greatest national seats of learning, and now that they are truly national, and no longer exclusive Anglican preserves, there is every reason why the Free Churches should avail themselves

fully of the unique privileges and advantages which they offer. The Presbyterians, the Congregationalists and the Methodists have long since done this, so why should Baptists lag behind? And if a Baptist college is to be transferred to Oxford or Cambridge then clearly it should be Regent's Park, both by reason of its present circumstances and even more by its past standing and reputation.

Regent's Park was known for the first period of its history as Stepney College, for it was at Stepney, in East London, that the institution was established in 1810. During the preceding 130 years many attempts had been made by London Baptists to deal with the problem of ministerial training, but with very partial success. Both the West and the North proved more progressive, and the Baptist Academies at Bristol and Horton, Bradford (now Rawdon College) were founded before the Metropolis had a similar institution. When at last the "Baptist Academical Institution at Stepney" came into being its committee invited the famous Joseph Kinghorn, of Norwich, to be the first "President and Resident Tutor". The invitation was not accepted, and Dr. William Newman, who had taken a prominent part in all the preliminary negotiations and plans, was appointed. The first three students entered into residence on April 8th, 1811, and there is extant a record of the beginning of the college work on the 9th. "The bell rang at 6. Business at 7. Lecture on the article and five declensions. Family worship at 8."

For three years Dr. Newman carried on unaided, although he also had the burden of an important pastorate. Then two assistant tutors were appointed, and with an increasing number of students rapid progress was made. In 1842, the first link with London University was forged, and Stepney became a college eligible to enter its students for the degree examinations. Some notable scholars served on the staff during the Stepney period—F. A. Cox, Solomon Young, Dr. W. H. Murch (President 1827-43), Dr. F. W. Gotch, later Principal of Bristol College, and Dr. Benjamin Davies, one of the most learned Hebraists of his day. From 1838 to 1844 Dr. Joseph Angus held the office of secretary. In 1849 he became President, and occupied that position for forty-four years. The first notable achievement of his long reign was the removal from East London to Holford House, Regent's Park, in 1856. In its new home, "unsurpassed in position and substantialness", as the Committee expressed it, and in close proximity to University College, New College and other educational institutions, the College made marked advance. Dr. Benjamin Davies, who had removed to Canada in 1847, was invited to re-join the staff, on

which he served with great distinction until 1875. When in the seventies the revision of the Bible was undertaken, Regent's Park was the only Free Church college in the country which had members of its staff on both the Old and the New Testament companies of revisers, Dr. Davies and Dr. Angus respectively—a striking tribute.

An increasing number of its students graduated at London University. In 1865 Dr. Angus was able to report that Regent's Park men had secured “The English Scholarship three times out of the five it has been awarded, and the Moral Philosophy Scholarship three times out of five.” At that time the College also had a number of lay students, many of whom attained high distinction. Among them were Prof. Sully, the psychologist, Dr. W. H. D. Rouse, the classical scholar, Sir F. Lely, the distinguished Indian civil servant, Sir Stephen Sale, of India, Sir Joseph F. Leese, K.C., M.P., Mr. A. Thomas, K.C., M.P., and Dr. Percy Lush. While the students, both lay and ministerial, were able to make full use of the facilities for graduation in Arts, there were no degrees in Divinity. To make up in a measure for that lack, thirteen Nonconformist colleges associated together to form the *Senatus Academicus*, which instituted theological examinations for the diplomas of A.T.S. and F.T.S. In the fourteen years of Regent's Park's membership its students headed the Honours List on nine occasions. The *Senatus* came to an end when London University instituted a Theological Faculty. Regent's became one of its “schools,” and its men were able to sit for the Divinity degrees as internal students. The first students to take the new B.D. degree were B. Grey Griffith and J. N. Rawson in 1904. In the next year three more were successful, including Theodore H. Robinson, now Professor of Semitic Languages at Cardiff University, who later became the first R.P.C. man to be awarded the London D.D. Altogether nearly eighty students of the college have taken the B.D. degree, in addition to a far larger number who have graduated in Arts.

This brief survey does not attempt a complete record, but it should include at least a reference to three men to whom the more recent achievements of the College owe much—Samuel W. Green, Professor from 1878 to 1925, Dr. George Pearce Gould, Professor from 1885 to 1896, and President from 1896 to 1920—affectionately known as Sammy and Georgie respectively to all their men—and Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson, President since 1920, and one of the most eminent living theologians and Biblical scholars.

Much more of interest might be written about the history of the College, but our main purpose is to say something

about its contribution to the life of our denomination in the service of the men who have been trained within its walls. To tell that story fully would require a volume, hence the present sketch will have many omissions.

Sixteen Regent's men have occupied the presidential chair of the Baptist Union. The first was Dr. J. M. Cramp, in 1838, and the most recent was R. Rowntree Clifford, whose noble life-work at the West Ham Central Mission is one of the greatest achievements in modern Baptist story. Dr. Cramp spent the latter part of his ministry in Canada, where he exercised a great influence. He is best remembered for his *Baptist History*. Others of the sixteen were Charles Stovel, Dr. Angus, Dr. William Brock, C. M. Birrell (father of the Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell), Dr. S. G. Green, Dr. A. McLaren (twice), J. T. Wigner, George Short, Dr. T. Vincent Tymms, J. R. Wood, Dr. F. B. Meyer, Dr. William Edwards, Dr. J. E. Roberts and Dr. W. E. Blomfield. To these should be added the name of Principal Gould, though he did not receive his training in the college over which he later presided.

The Regent's contribution to denominational leadership has been even more notable in another way. Presidents come and presidents go, but the secretary goes on—if not for ever, at least for a long time. Three Regent's men have held the important position of Secretary of the Baptist Union—J. H. Millard, Dr. S. Harris Booth and Dr. J. H. Shakespeare, the last named perhaps the greatest of all denominational secretaries.

Our Baptist colleges hold a somewhat anomalous position in our denominational life. Unlike the colleges of Methodism or Presbyterianism, which belong to the whole Church and are under its direct authority, our colleges are completely independent institutions. They exist to serve the denomination, but they are subject to no denominational control. They are also independent of each other. Each has its own governing body, and is subject only to its own constituency of subscribers and supporters. The colleges, with one exception, are in membership with the Baptist Union, but they retain their independence, as do the churches which are in such membership.

In spite of the "splendid isolation" in which the colleges carry on their work, however, they are not competing institutions. Their rivalry is of the most friendly kind, and there is a good deal of mutual intercourse and co-operation between them. In this respect Regent's Park has made by far the most notable contribution. The most recent illustration is the arrangement whereby some of the most promising students of other colleges pass on to Regent's Park for the completion of their training. This has been in operation since the beginning of the work in

Oxford, and already students from Bristol, Rawdon and Cardiff have benefited from it. Even more notable, and covering a far longer period, has been the Regent's Park contribution to the professorial staffs of its sister colleges. No college is so parochial and shortsighted as to confine its choice of tutors and professors to its own alumni. It wisely chooses the best available man to fill any tutorial vacancy, and in this respect the colleges are all debtors one to another. But far and away their greatest debt is to Regent's Park. In the case of Rawdon, for example, four of its Principals in succession, from 1863 to 1926, were Regent's Park College men—Dr. S. G. Green, T. G. Rooke, Dr. T. Vincent Tymms and Dr. W. E. Blomfield. Not less memorable was the Regent's contribution to the Rawdon staff in the persons of the beloved William Medley and David Glass, both of whom gave practically their whole life of ministerial service to the Yorkshire college, and whose names are held in reverence by all Rawdonians of the past seventy years. The now defunct Midland College had Regent's Park College Principals in Dr. T. Witton Davies and S. W. Bowser, while Cardiff had Dr. W. Edwards and J. M. Davies. There has been no Regent's Park College Principal of Bristol, but Dr. F. W. Gotch, one of the most distinguished holders of that office, “won his spurs” as a theological tutor on the staff of Regent's Park. Also it should be remembered that Dr. James A Spurgeon, for many years the vice-president of Pastors' College, now Spurgeon's, and after the death of C. H. Spurgeon, its President, was a Regent's man. And the story is well known of the mishap which prevented a meeting between Dr. Angus and the young village preacher in Cambridgeshire which, if it had taken place, would almost certainly have resulted in Charles Haddon Spurgeon himself becoming a Regent's student. Had that eventuated the later Spurgeon story would have lost none of its glory, but modern Baptist history might have been saved some of its less happy controversies and divisions.

It is not only the colleges in this country which are thus indebted to Regent's Park. Equally notable has been its contribution to the staffing of Serampore, which is not only our most important Baptist Missionary Society college but also one of the chief schools of theological learning in the whole mission field. Its modern re-organisation, marking a far more important advance than is commonly recognised among our people, was under the principalship of Dr. George Howells, who was succeeded by the present Principal, G. H. C. Angus. Both are Regent's men, and at more than one period of its history the whole of the European teaching staff have been of the same ilk. Next to Serampore the most famous of our Baptist Missionary

Society colleges is Calabar, Jamaica. Two of its most successful principals, David Jonathan East and Arthur James, were Regent's men, and the college is now entering upon a new era of prosperity under another, Dr. Gurnos King. In Australia the Queensland Baptist College has for many years been under the principalship of William Bell, now one of the Regent's veterans, while among others who have won distinction in tutorial work may be mentioned Dr. T. Harwood Pattison, for many years professor at Rochester Theological Seminary, U.S.A.

The scholastic eminence of a theological college is best demonstrated by the number of its students who themselves attain eminence in theological learning, and if this be accepted as the test, then it is beyond any question that Regent's Park stands first among our Baptist colleges. Even so, however, the chief purpose of a theological college is to train men for the ministry. It may justly be proud of its scholars, but if it does not produce preachers and pastors of whom it can be equally proud, it is failing of its main purpose. How does Regent's Park stand in this respect? A perusal of its list of alumni makes clear that if it cannot claim to excel its sister institutions it is certainly in no whit inferior to them. The once popular saying in many Baptist circles that "Regent's produces scholars and \_\_\_\_\_ produces preachers" was never more than a half truth. Regent's has produced scholars *and* preachers, to a very notable degree.

It would be generally agreed that the greatest, certainly the most famous, preacher among Regent's men was Alexander McLaren, one of the pulpit giants of the nineteenth century. He was only sixteen years of age when he applied for admission to the old college at Stepney, and the Committee were struck with his very youthful appearance. But they were struck even more by the excellence of his examination papers, and they had no hesitancy about accepting him. He left the college in 1846, and for the next twelve years ministered at Southampton. In July, 1858, he entered upon the pastorate at Manchester that was to continue for nearly half a century and to become of world-wide fame and influence. We recall Sir W. Robertson Nicoll's tribute: "McLaren's natural gifts were extraordinary. He was out of sight the most brilliant man all round I ever knew. . . . Will there ever again be such a combination of spiritual insight, of scholarship, of passion, of style, of keen intellectual power? He was clearly a man of genius, and men of genius are very rare. So long as preachers care to teach from the Scriptures they will find their best help and guide in him. We shall not see his like again."

Dr. McLaren's fame is secure, and none would dare to

pluck the laurels from his brow. But *was* he the greatest preacher among Regent's men? The claim has at least been challenged. Twenty-five years ago the closing address of the College session was given by Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury, himself a notable preacher and a keen student of preaching. He took for his subject “The sermons of Edmund Luscombe Hull.” We quote his opening paragraph. “I wish this evening to take as my subject the sermons of Edmund Luscombe Hull—Regent's Park's greatest gift to myself, and to countless other ministers. Your college has produced at least three immortal preachers: John Pulsford, who left in 1840; Alexander McLaren, who left in 1846; and Edmund Luscombe Hull, who left ten years later. The first two lived to a ripe and fruitful age, but the last faded away in the maytime of his years, and died at the early age of thirty. Pulsford was a mystic. McLaren was an expositor. Hull was a spiritual psychologist. Pulsford explored the spiritual frontiers. McLaren explored the word of God. Hull explored the human soul. Pulsford grasped big chunks of truth from the unseen, and often served them upside down. McLaren coaxed secret meanings out of shy verses and intractable Hebrew roots. Hull minted his own rich, deep melancholy for the benefit of his fellow-men. Pulsford sat at the feet of Jacob Boehme, McLaren at the feet of Benjamin Davies, and Hull at the feet of Sir William Hamilton and the great poets. It was Pulsford who saw the farthest, it was McLaren who saw the clearest, it was Hull who saw the deepest. Since your last annual meeting the jubilee of his death has passed. It is therefore fitting that I should call attention to him as Regent's Park's greatest preacher.”

Many will read that passage with surprise, for “a generation has arisen that knew not Joseph”, and to most Baptists, and—be it said to their shame—to many Baptist ministers, Hull's is an unknown or forgotten name. He left college in 1855, and it was at Kings Lynn that the sermons were preached which, after his premature death in 1862, were edited by his brother and published in three volumes. They ran through many editions, and although long since out of print may sometimes be found in secondhand bookshops. When any Baptist eye alights upon them in such a place they should be recognised as bargains to be snapped up at once, no matter what the price. We have quoted Robertson Nicoll's testimony to McLaren: here is what that eminent critic once wrote about Hull (*British Monthly*, January, 1901). “Edmund Luscombe Hull would, had he lived, have been the first of British preachers. Indeed, I am by no means sure that he did not occupy this position at the time of his early death. The one man to be named with Hull was Frederick

Robertson, of Brighton, but there was about Hull a quiet strength and patience which Robertson never possessed, and a still greater mastery of the last secrets of English prose."

Pulsford, McLaren, Hull—the great triumvirate! In popular esteem, however, at least two of them were far outdistanced by another Regent's man, Dr. F. B. Meyer. He was a man of great gifts and tireless energy. In his pastorates in Leicester and London he did a noble work, both in the realms of evangelism and of social service, while as a Convention speaker he was honoured and beloved throughout the English-speaking world. He also wielded a facile pen, and he published some scores of books and booklets, chiefly of devotional exposition. Perhaps he would have accomplished more, at least of permanent value, had he attempted less, but it has been given to few men to exercise so wide an influence, or to touch so many lives for good. F. B. Meyer's name will ever stand high on the Regent's "Honours' List."

And what shall we more say? For the time would fail to tell of all those who have gone forth from the College to serve their day and generation, and who, seeking not fame for themselves, have won a good report—of men like Silas Mead, who did such fine work for many years in Australia, Dr. Samuel Cox, the first editor of *The Expositor*, J. Hunt Cooke, editor of *The Freeman*, later the *Baptist Times*, W. J. Mathams, author of "Christ of the upward way", "God is with us, God is with us", "Jesus, Friend of little children", and other hymns. W. S. E. Hay, one of the Baptist pioneers in South Africa, and pastors and preachers like Alfred Tilly, of Cardiff, Charles Vince, of Birmingham, George Short, of Salisbury, Robert Caven, of Leicester, J. R. Wood, of Upper Holloway, T. H. Martin, of Glasgow, J. E. Roberts and Arnold Streuli, both of Manchester, G. Howard James, of Nottingham and Derby, and a National President of the Christian Endeavour Movement, E. C. Pike, Edward Medley, W. V. Robinson, W. W. Sidey, C. M. Hardy, W. Bampton Taylor and many another, both among those who are still in active service in this and other lands, and those who have passed to their eternal reward.

Last, but not least, we think of the Regent's missionary record. It is one of which the College has reason to be proud. At one time Bristol was recognised as the leading missionary college, but for many years now it has had to yield pride of place to Regent's Park College. An analysis of the college trained men on the Baptist Missionary Society staff, at home and abroad, in the College centenary year, 1910, shows that the largest number were Regent's men, with Bristol and Spurgeon's next in order. In the years since then Spurgeon's has made a

notable advance and now occupies second place, but Regent's is still in the lead, though only very slightly.

To give a full list of Regent's Park College missionaries is not possible in our limited space, but it includes the immortal name of Tom Comber, and others less famous but not less worthy of fame—such as Herbert Dixon and Sydney Ennals, the Boxer martyrs, Dr. J. P. Bruce, later the Professor of Chinese at London University, Arthur Sowerby, A. G. Shorrocks, Dr. Cecil Robertson and Dr. John Lewis, all of China; Dr. G. H. Rouse, J. Drew Bate, Arthur Jewson, A. Teichmann, R. H. Tregillus, T. W. Norledge, T. O. Ransford and W. Sutton Page, of India; F. D. Waldo and Bruce Etherington, of Ceylon; Leonard Tucker of India and Jamaica; Percy Comber, Harry White, F. R. Oram, W. L. Forfeitt, W. H. Doke, W. P. Balfour and H. Sutton Smith, of the Congo; W. Kemme Landels and J. Campbell Wall, of Italy; A. Llewellyn Jenkins, of Brittany, and a fine body of men who are still in active service and nobly maintaining the great college tradition.

Equally notable has been the Regent's share in Baptist Missionary Society headquarter's leadership and administration. Before he became Principal of the college, Dr. Angus was for some years the Secretary of the Missionary Society. In later years another Regent's Park College man, Clement Bailhache, held that office, while to-day all the four ministerial members of the staff at Furnival Street—C. E. Wilson, the foreign secretary, B. Grey Griffith, the home secretary, E. A. Payne, the editorial secretary and W. W. Bottoms, the Young People's Secretary—own the same college allegiance, though in the case of the last named it is shared with Bristol, Mr. Bottoms being one of those students who under the new scheme have passed on to Regent's Park for the completion of their training.

During the century and a quarter of its history Regent's Park College has trained nearly 650 men for ministerial or missionary service. Those men have made a great contribution to our denominational life, and the denomination should be proud of the college which prepared them for their life work, and which has such a notable record of honourable achievement. That pride should find practical expression in generous and enthusiastic support of the move to Oxford. The establishment of the College in that ancient university marks the beginning of a new chapter in its history that holds promise of even more notable achievement than the past has known. It is also an event of outstanding denominational significance. The College in Oxford will do honour not only to itself but to the whole Baptist Church. Hence all Baptists may well echo the old College cry, “Forward Regent's!”

PERCY AUSTIN.